

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 8, 2011

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Hot Springs veterans home named National Historic Landmark

PIERRE, S.D. – The Battle Mountain Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Hot Springs has been designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior, the South Dakota State Historical Society has announced.

The Battle Mountain Sanitarium, as it is commonly called, is one of 14 new national historic landmarks in 11 states and the District of Columbia that have played an integral role in the development of the country, according to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar.

“Each of these landmarks represents a chapter in the story of America, from archeological sites dating back more than two millennia to historic train depots, homes of famous artists, and buildings designed by some of our greatest architects,” said Salazar. “By designating these sites as national landmarks, we help meet the goals of President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative to establish a conservation ethic for the 21st century and reconnect people, especially young people, to our nation’s historic, cultural, and natural heritage.”

“The Battle Mountain Sanitarium was the first veterans hospital in the United States; up to that point, the federal government only built veterans homes,” said Jay D. Vogt (Vote), director of the State Historical Society. “We are pleased that the Battle Mountain Sanitarium is joining 15 other National Historic Landmarks in South Dakota. A National Historic Landmark is the highest level of recognition given to significant buildings, sites and structures. Of course, the entire community of Hot Springs is also important for its sandstone buildings. This designation benefits Hot Springs as well as the state of South Dakota.”

Established in 1902 and opened in 1907, the Battle Mountain Sanitarium represented acknowledgement of the need for specialized medical care for veterans, Vogt noted. The facility utilized the waters from nearby mineral springs to treat residents. The primary complex features a prominent administration center connected to an innovative hospital complex that placed wards in rectangular spokes. Hot Springs National Cemetery is also an integral part of the complex.

The other 15 National Historic Landmarks in South Dakota:

- Arzberger Archaeological Site near Pierre;
- Bear Butte near Sturgis;
- Blood Run Archaeological Site near Shindler in Lincoln County and Granite, Iowa;

- Bloom Archaeological Site near Bloom in Hanson County;
- Crow Creek Site near Chamberlain;
- Deadwood Historic District in Deadwood;
- Fort Pierre Chouteau Site near Fort Pierre;
- Fort Thompson Mounds near Fort Thompson;
- Frawley Ranch near Spearfish;
- Langdeau Archaeological Site near Lower Brule;
- Mitchell Archaeological Site near Mitchell;
- Molstad Prehistoric Village near Mobridge;
- Vanderbilt Archaeological Site near Pollock;
- Verendrye Plate Site near Fort Pierre; and
- Wounded Knee Site on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

For more information on historic preservation, contact the State Historical Society at www.history.sd.gov/Preservation or call (605) 773-3458.

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Cutline information: The administration center of the Battle Mountain Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Hot Springs. (Photo courtesy South Dakota State Historical Society)

The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Tourism. The Department of Tourism is comprised of Tourism, the South Dakota Arts Council, and the State Historical Society. The Department is led by Secretary James D. Hagen. The State Historical Society is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.